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DEPT FOR INL/LP AND INL/RM
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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [SNAR](#) [SENV](#) [KCRM](#) [PTER](#) [CO](#)
SUBJECT: NAS MONTHLY REPORT FOR FEBRUARY 2009

SUMMARY

[¶](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Due to poor weather, 6,410 total hectares were sprayed in February; eradication aircraft were involved in one hostile fire incident. February's operations in Tumaco included several NAS humanitarian missions to aid victims of floods and violence. The GOC's 2009 manual eradication campaign startup was postponed to March 1 and the goal reduced to 70,000 hectares from 100,000 hectares in 2008. ARAVI's NAS-supported fleet flew 1,417 mission hours in February. Interdiction elements, the 'Carabineros' or 'rural police' and DIRAN's Ports and Airports Area teams were involved in multiple joint operations that led to seizures of precursor chemicals, narcotics, assets, and captures of criminals. The ongoing Jungla International Course includes 57 Colombian students and 49 foreign students from 12 Latin American countries. The 19th environmental verification mission is scheduled to take place March 24-April 4. The desertion rate of narcoterrorists continued at nine people deserting per day, although Ministry of Defense's budget shortfalls threaten the progress of the demobilization program. Presidential decree 613 allowed for demobilized former FARC 47 Front Commander "Karina" and "Saldana" to be released from prison and serve the remainder of their sentences under house arrest, becoming "messengers of peace." On February 24, the GOC released the National Household Drug Survey executive summary results that showed that 9.1 percent of Colombians have tried an illegal substance at least once in their lifetimes. END SUMMARY.

AERIAL ERADICATION PROGRAM

[¶](#)12. (SBU) In February, 6,410 total hectares were sprayed. Poor weather continued to affect spray production, with slight improvement toward the end of the month. The CONDOR team, based in Caucasia and Barrancabermeja, sprayed 2,980 hectares and the LOBO team in Tumaco sprayed 3,429 hectares. This brings the calendar year total to 12,279 hectares of coca sprayed. Eradication aircraft were involved in one hostile fire incident in February resulting in one impact. This brings the total for the year to four hostile fire incidents and a total of four impacts.

[¶](#)13. (SBU) The Caucasia campaign, in spite of continuous poor weather, produced just under 4,000 (3,959) hectares. The spray package was preceded in Barrancabermeja by BCNA units supported with PCHP assets. This strategy formed part of a concerted effort to offset the historically high number of hostile fire impacts received in this area. The strategy had the desired effect, as we suffered only one impact for the month of February. Additionally, the use of three strategically-placed FARPs (forward refueling points) is partially negating the effects of weather, and ensuring that

Barrancabermeja campaign goals will be reached. The Tumaco area continued to experience heavy rainfall. Heavy flooding affected both indigenous populations and CNP spray operations. February's operations in Tumaco included several NAS C-27 humanitarian missions to move relief supplies. 2009's spray operations continue to be carried out in improved coordination with Accion Social's manual eradication efforts. Aerial eradication continues to remain flexible, adjusting to manual eradication changes and increasing synergy with the GOC's strategic eradication efforts.

MANUAL ERADICATION PROGRAM

¶4. (SBU) The GOC's 2009 manual eradication campaign, initially scheduled to kick-off on February 15, was postponed to March 1 due to administrative problems that have slowed down the contracting of civilian eradicators. The 2009 manual eradication goal has been reduced to 70,000 hectares (compared to 100,000 in 2008) due to budget cuts and will again focus on all major coca growing regions in Colombia, including the Ecuador border region that is currently off limits to aerial eradication. After falling short of eradication goals for poppy in 2008, this year the antinarcotics police plan to intensify efforts to attack poppy cultivation and will dedicate one of the 20 Carabinero police units providing security to manual eradicators for poppy eradication operations. After record marijuana seizures in 2008, the director of the antinarcotics police has also stated interest in increasing marijuana eradication in the Sierra Nevada region of Colombia. Separate from the manual eradication program, the Colombian Army and the Colombian National Police conduct manual eradication as part of their normal operations. Through February, approximately 1,000 hectares of coca have been manually eradicated by army and police units.

COLOMBIA NATIONAL POLICE (CNP)
AIR SERVICE (ARAVI) SUPPORT

¶5. (SBU) ARAVI's NAS-supported fleet flew 1,417 mission hours in February. The seven UH-60 Black Hawks closed out the month with 166 flight hours and an Operational Readiness (OR) rate of 65 percent. One UH-60 is being repaired by the factory and should be operational next month.

¶6. (SBU) The Bell 212 fleet flew 159 mission hours with an OR rate of 67 percent. Two Bell 212's have yet to be inducted to the Service Life Extension Program/Rewire. The Huey II OR rate was 66 percent while flying 696 hours. Two Huey II aircraft, or six percent of the fleet, is currently undergoing depot maintenance for structural repairs.

¶7. (SBU) The DC-3 fleet flew 231 hours in February, with an OR rate of 44 percent; one DC-3 is undergoing a 2,000-hour inspection, and another DC-3 was lost during a ground incident (explosion) at Airport Olaya Herrera Medellin, Department of Antioquia, on February 11.

¶8. An incident investigation is underway. The last C-26 Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance Aerial Platform (ISRAP) PNC 0224's expected delivery is April 2009.

INTERDICTION

¶9. (SBU) The Colombian National Police (CNP) seized 6.7 metric tons of cocaine hydrochloride (HCl) and cocaine base, 9.6 metric tons of marijuana, and 162 kilograms (kgs) of heroin. The CNP also destroyed 15 cocaine HCl labs, 138 coca base labs, and captured 1,553 metric tons of precursor chemicals.

¶10. (SBU) Highlights for February include the notable seizure of 1,553 metric tons of precursor chemicals. The DIRAN (Colombian Antinarcotics Police Directorate) conducted a major surge operation against cocaine precursor chemicals focusing on supply networks in both Bogota city and the Casanare Department. Precursor chemicals included cement, diesel, gasoline, sulfuric acid, acetone, and potassium chloride. DIRAN targeted (through human and technical intelligence) gas stations, hardware and agricultural supply stores.

On February 2, the DIRAN Uraba Section captured 1.15 tons of cocaine at a road checkpoint near Chigorodo, Antioquia Department. On February 5, the DIRAN Tuluá Junglas captured 58 kilograms of

cocaine at a road checkpoint near La Cruz, Nario Department. On February 7, the DIRAN Uraba Company captured eighty kilograms of cocaine camouflaged in a refrigerator truck in Turbo, Antioquia Department. On February 11, the DIRAN Intelligence Group in Santa Marta passed information to the DEA regional headquarters in Cartagena leading to the seizure of a go-fast boat carrying 600 kilograms of cocaine; a French Navy vessel, operating in international waters off the coast of the Guajira Department, made the seizure. On February 12, DIRAN seized 150 kilograms of cocaine hidden in a false compartment of a vehicle stopped near Planeta Rica, Cordoba Department. On February 15, the DIRAN Western Zone captured 453 kilograms of cocaine transported in a "go-fast" in international waters near Bahia Solano, Choco Department. On February 18, the DIRAN Northeastern Zone destroyed a cocaine HCl lab containing 418 kilograms of cocaine near Cucuta, Norte de Santander.

On February 21, the DIRAN Heroin Group seized 22 kilograms of heroin hidden in the gas tank of a vehicle near Caucasia, Antioquia.

On February 25, DIRAN executed "Operation Iceberg, Second Generation," simultaneously in Cali, Cartagena, and Barranquilla, capturing 13 people (including three sons of extradited narcotrafficker Gilberto Rodriguez) and seizing 16 properties in asset forfeiture. On February 27, the DIRAN seized an improperly documented single engine aircraft near Espinal, Tolima.

¶10. (SBU) Several DIRAN courses are underway at the Antinarcotics Police Training Center in Pijao, Tolima to include the 23-week Combat Medic Course (40 students), the seven-week Explorer Course (for scout/reconnaissance teams), the eight-week Explosives and Demolitions Course (45 students), and the 18-week Jungla (Colombian Antinarcotics Police Airmobile Commandos) International Course (106 students). The Jungla International Course includes 57 Colombian students and 49 foreign students from 12 Latin American countries (Haiti, Jamaica, Dominican Republic, Belize, Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Costa Rica, Panama, Peru, Argentina, and Brazil). The Panama Frontier Force sent a contingent of 25 students. The Panamanian students have performed well in this challenging course. The US Army 7th Special Forces Group's five-week course (40 Jungla students) entered into the final phase, focusing on Close Quarters Combat.

MARITIME INTERDICTION

¶11. (SBU) Based on human intelligence source, a Naval Intelligence Group (GRUIN in its Spanish acronym) infiltrated a location in Cordoba from the sea and was able to locate a small weapons cache containing eight AK-47s, seventeen AK-47 magazines, two pistols and various ammunition belonging to alias "Don Mario". In a Joint USCG / COLNAV operation, the USSCG Hamilton rescued the crew of a sinking go-fast boat. The four-crew members were turned over to Colombian Navy (COLNAV) authorities with one brick (kilogram) of cocaine that was found on the sinking vessel. On February 15, in another joint operation, the USSCG Hamilton intercepted another go-fast boat containing 454 kilograms of cocaine and 4 crewmembers; the crewmembers and cocaine were turned over to COLNAV authorities. At the end of February, based on human intelligence sources, the Colombian Coast Guard crew intercepted another sea-going vessel off of the coast of Choco (near Bahia Solano) with approximately 3 metric tons of marihuana.

¶12. (SBU) During a visit to Bahia Solano - a mission-critical location off of the coast of Choco - program officer found that the Colombian Coast Guard had two go-fasts for its 12 unit members and the men did not have adequate billeting arrangements, logistical support, fuel storage, communication assets, weapons, safety equipment, and adequate interceptors.

WEAPONS

¶13. (SBU) The DIRAN weapon section deployed the majority of its manpower to Pijao during the month of February to support training and immediate weapons maintenance in support of manual eradication missions.

BASE SECURITY/ROAD INTERDICTION/

NVD PROGRAM

¶14. (SBU) The one-month Base Defense course in San Jose de Guaviare began on February 18. A total of 48 students - DIRAN personnel from the base, Carabineros from the Guaviare and Vichada Departments and four members of the Joaquin Paris battalion of the Colombian Army - began the course.

¶15. (SBU) The IDIQ (indefinite amount/indefinite quantities) projects progressed as follows: the Bastion Wall contract for the project at San Jose de Guaviare that was completed on January 15 was modified to include the installation of three two-story bunker facilities. The Miraflores project contract was finalized and personnel and materials began arriving at the site the last week of February; the project is scheduled to be completed within 45-60 days. The Bastion Wall contract for La Uribe was awarded to and is scheduled to be completed in time for the March 12 inauguration of the base. ACS is the primary contractor for San Jose de Guaviare and La Uribe and DSS/LLC is the primary contractor for Miraflores.

¶16. (SBU) Planning for the next Joint/Combined Interagency Operation Firewall which began in January continued throughout February. Timelines have been established for the continued planning, coordination, equipment testing and command briefs prior to mission(s) execution. Colombian participants will include the Military Forces of the Navy, Coast Guard, Marines, Air Force and the Police Forces from the Carabineros, Junglas and DIRAN Aviation. The U.S. agencies include DEA, MILGP, Air Bridge Denial, NAS and JIATF-S.

¶17. (SBU) A NAS interdiction night vision goggle advisor completed both a basic level maintenance course and the first-ever intermediate level maintenance course for DIRAN and Carabinero members from throughout the country. Inspections, required maintenance and inventories on Night Vision Devices (NVDs) continued at: El Dorado, Guaymaral, Facatativa, Espinal, Pijao, Cespo and DITRA. Another 185 (for a total of 335), of the 500 NVDs purchased for DICAR, arrived in February.

COMMUNICATIONS

¶18. (SBU) The DICAR radios section traveled throughout Colombia supporting its Mobile Training Teams (MTT) in instruction on Motorola radios, Thales radios and basic HF Tadiran radios.

¶19. (SBU) DIRAN radio section replaced a Motorola repeater in Cerro Kennedy (Santa Marta), which is the most important repeater in the zone given its location and vast coverage. In addition, two Motorola repeaters were also installed in the Colombian Marine Corps Base in Covenas to support joint counternarcotics operations on the North Coast, specifically the Firewall. The DIRAN radio technicians also visited units participating in the Firewall to conduct encryption change -ver and radio checks.

¶20. (SBU) Program officer met with TC Gordillo of the CNP to discuss Wide Area Network (WAN) expansion project in Cartagena that should be implemented in late March 2009.

PORT SECURITY PROGRAM (PSP)

¶21. (SBU) In February, DIRAN's Ports and Airports Area (ARPAE) unit seized 5,000 gallons of liquid chemical precursors(ACPM) and 4.2 metric tons of solid chemical precursors (sodium carbonate); 80.8 kilograms of cocaine at the Port of Uraba; 60.9 kilograms of cocaine at the Port of Cartagena; 25 kilograms of cocaine, 6.7 kilograms of marijuana and 100 grams of heroin at the Airport of Cali; 1.4 kilograms of cocaine at the airport of Cartagena; USD 22,839 that were not declared at the airport of Barranquilla; USD 11,400 that were not declared at the airport of Medellin; 72.2 kilograms of cocaine, 100 grams of amphetamines, 20.1 of heroin, 69.5 kilograms of marijuana, USD 50,654 and 11,956 Euros that were not declared and

USD 7,900 that had been fabricated. The DIRAN dogs participated in 12 drug seizure cases and one weapon seizure. The process to select dogs for the new anti-explosive course finished with seven dogs that will start the course during the first week of March.

¶22. (SBU) The DIRAN polygraph unit conducted polygraph exams on 200 members of the DIRAN's Interdiction, Aviation, Eradication, Administrative and Ports and Airports units, supporting the Internal Control Group activities on specific cases. 143 of them passed the exam, 48 failed, and nine were inconclusive.

REESTABLISH POLICE PRESENCE PROGRAM (CARABINEROS)

¶23. (SBU) During February, the EMCAR Squadrons continued to operate throughout the country conducting operations against the Emerging Criminal Bands (BACRIM) and providing security along the major lines of communication. The EMCAR also were called on to support a large-scale search of a prison near Cali.

¶24. (SBU) NAS turned over the new police station in Guateque to the CNP; the station will serve as a base for a carabineros mounted unit to conduct rural patrols in the surrounding region.

¶25. (SBU) The training school in Pijaos is currently conducting medical, designated marksman, and countermine training with a total of 173 students. The next basic course is scheduled for March.

¶26. (SBU) During February, 204 personnel were captured - one FARC/ELN, 35 BACRIM, three narcoterrorists, and 165 common criminals; 24 laboratories were destroyed; and 136 weapons, 352 kilograms of explosives, 150 kilograms of cocaine, 604 kilograms of cocaine base, and 62 kilograms of marihuana were seized.

ENVIRONMENTAL

¶27. (SBU) In February, the interagency complaints committee received 65 new claims of alleged spray damage to legal crops. There are currently 692 cases that are being processed by the DIRAN. This means that DIRAN is either awaiting additional information from the complainant, the case is being reviewed, or the verification visit is pending. In February, USG paid for 36 complaints, totaling 167.423.550 COP (approximately USD 79,700.00).

¶28. (SBU) During late February, NAS received 36 complaints from USAID alternative development project recipients in Tumaco, Nario stating that spray operations occurred on their land. The verification team traveled to Tumaco March 9-10 to conduct the field visit. The meeting to determine compensation for legitimate complaints will take place the third week of March.

¶29. (SBU) The 19 verification mission is scheduled from March 24-April 4. The verification team plans to visit Caucasia, Guaviare, Meta, Caquet y Nario.

INDIVIDUAL DEMOBILIZATION PROGRAM

¶30. (SBU) The Ministry of Defense's (MOD) demobilization program continues into 2009 with high desertion rates of approximately nine people deserting per day. The most common motivations for desertion are abuse by commanders and military pressure. Information provided by the demobilized persons about their former organizations remains one of the best sources of intelligence available to Colombian security forces. Large budget shortfalls have not yet been remedied, impacting plans for communicating demobilization message deep into the countryside, payment for valuable information, prevention of illegal recruitment and psychological/social assistance.

¶31. (SBU) Intense legal and political coordination between the Presidency, the Ministry of Defense, and the Ministry of Interior and Justice concluded in February permitting the first results of Presidential decree 613. Demobilized former FARC 47 Front Commander Elda Neyis Mosquera Garca ("Karina") and Ral Agudelo Medina ("Saldana"), will be released from prison and serve the remainder of

their sentences under house arrest from where they will "promote peace and respect for international human rights."

DRUG DEMAND REDUCTION

¶32. (SBU) On February 24, the GOC released the National Household Drug Survey executive summary results that showed that 9.1 percent of Colombians have tried an illegal substance at least once in their lifetimes. Complete results will be available in a couple of months. NAS/INL provided almost half of the funds to conduct this first nation-wide drug consumption survey to take place since 1996, and NAS served as a member of the technical committee composed of the UNODC, Ministry of Social Protection, and the Directorate of Dangerous Drugs (DNE in its Spanish acronym).

BROWNFIELD